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## **Job Creation: Essential Los Angeles County Business**

The economic crisis that began in 2007 was a defining event for industry leaders and government institutions at all levels. For the fortunate, the turmoil of the Great Recession is slowly becoming a distant memory, one that is relegated to the past. For far too many, however, the struggle continues, especially for communities of color where economic inequality persists and the availability of good paying jobs remains a scarce commodity.

The nationwide and countywide unemployment rates have improved to [5 percent](#) and 6.2 percent, respectively, which are significantly better than the 10.2 percent and 12.6 percent recorded as a result of the Great Recession.

Still, compare that with the current unemployment rate in the Los Angeles County cities of Willowbrook, 10 percent; Compton, 9.6 percent; Inglewood, 8.1 percent; Carson, 7.9 percent; and Lynwood, 7.6 percent. One has to wonder whether the slump is indeed a distant memory, particularly for communities of color.

The Second District of Los Angeles County has the county's highest poverty rate at 22 percent – that's one out of every five residents – as well as the lowest [median household income: \\$42,695 a year](#). These statistics are shockingly tragic, especially in a County

deemed the world's 19th largest economy, with a [gross domestic product exceeding \\$544 billion](#).

Our collective response to the greatest economic downturn since the 1930's has been, at best, reactive but more accurately described as disjointed and haphazard. At first, we witnessed massive layoffs by both the private and public sectors in an effort to reduce costs in the face of declining revenues.

Although Los Angeles County government was unique and able to avoid layoffs and furloughs, services to those most in need were curtailed or eliminated, and our aging, dilapidated infrastructure was left for the next generation to address. Subsequent legislation at the federal and state levels eventually set the stage for righting local budgets and the resurgence currently underway.

As the national economy continues to show signs of improvement, it is imperative that we plan and prepare for the future. As history has taught us, economies operate in cycles and the next downturn, unwelcome as it may be, is only a matter of time.

If the Great Recession taught County leaders anything, it is that our ability to meet our core responsibility of providing a safety net for those in great need – the elderly, the disabled, the homeless, the youth – while ensuring that our communities remain safe and healthy, is intimately and extrinsically tied to the health and vitality of our economy, with the tax revenues it affords us.

It is for this reason that the County is taking a significant step forward in acknowledging the value that it can bring to the table for ensuring that our local economy continues to provide quality jobs needed to sustain healthy, vibrant communities.

On Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors will entertain a [motion \(Ridley-Thomas and Solis\)](#) to create a County Economic Development Trust Fund that would provide loans to small and medium-sized manufacturers, as well as technical support to the bioscience industry, among other industry sectors.

Bioscience, although currently a small sector of the regional economy with approximately 40,000 jobs, has significant growth potential according to a [2014 County-commissioned study by the Battelle Memorial Institute](#). It was one of the few industry sectors in the County that continued to expand during the recent recession.

The Trust Fund will also support other emerging industries, such as aerospace, health services and trade; renovate old storefronts to revitalize local commercial corridors; and expand joint investments with cities and community-based economic development organizations.

This new economic development effort at the County will be guided by our commitment to local hire programs and living wages, and will be done in partnership with community-based economic development organizations and local municipalities. And it will work hand-in-hand with the County's ongoing investment to train our workforce for the industries of the future.

Los Angeles County must be proactive and catalytic. Our collective vigilance to ensure that our regional economy becomes healthier and that all communities share in this prosperity is the hard lesson learned, but not forgotten, from the greatest recession of the modern era.

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